



Truck 12 from Engine 20 responded to the roof fire at the Mazza Gallerie shopping center in Friendship Heights in March.

# The Siren

THE D.C. FIRE AND EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Spring 2002

**The D.C. Fire and EMS Siren**

is published quarterly by the D.C. Fire and Emergency Medical Services Department  
Public Information Office  
1923 Vermont Avenue, N.W. Washington, DC 20001  
202-673-3331

**Ronnie Few, Fire/EMS Chief**

**Public Information Staff**

Lisa Bass, Sr. PIO/Editor  
Gwen Smith, Public Affairs Specialist  
Alan E. Etter, Public Affairs Specialist  
Denise L. Reed, Intergovernmental Liaison

Photos by Nolan Williams and Alan E. Etter



Anthony A. Williams, Mayor  
Government of District of Columbia

DC Fire & EMS Department

## A Message from the Chief

This month, business leaders honored our finest achievers as part of the Mayor's Meritorious Service Awards Luncheon. Shared with police, the honors bestowed on our personnel by the business community are much appreciated. In fact, they have become a tradition that began with a Congressional mandate to recognize the achievements of police and fire responders.

As we seek to achieve unity of effort throughout the Department, I believe all members from each Division should be recognized for their outstanding efforts. Like interlocking pieces of a puzzle, our

emergency response system depends on each team member executing his or her unique role. At our best, we are a magnificent picture of pride and determination. Awards help us recognize that we must always seek excellence in our efforts to provide citizens the rights we all deserve: life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

With this in mind, I have directed staff to organize a 2002 DCFEMS Awards



Ceremony. This event, tentatively planned in late June, will recognize the Department's finest. The ceremony is necessary for two reasons: 1) our fire service bronze bar awardees should be recognized and 2) we must begin to recognize and embrace the value brought by all members of our emergency response system.

I welcome the praise from the D.C. Chamber of Commerce and from the

Mayor's Office, which sponsors the Cafritz Awards, given for outstanding public service throughout the D.C. government. The deadline for nominations for the Cafritz Awards is April 2. However, I believe we must also hear the rumble of applause from within our own ranks. I invite all to join me in taking my hat off to so many of our personnel who deserve to hear the words: job well done.

Ronnie Few  
Fire/EMS Chief

## DCFEMS Women Trailblazers

By Lisa Bass

In recognition of March as Women's History Month, the Department recognized the achievements of the highest-ranking women in each division of the agency. A short synopsis of their achievements follows:

Communications Division  
**Lt. La Wanda Calloway**  
Watch Commander

Year Started: May 1976 in Property and Procurement

Career Highlights: First woman to be promoted to Fire Communications Division in 1978; helped with saving a



LaWanda Calloway  
Lieutenant

baby from drowning by guiding father in rescue breathing techniques on January 2002; credited with fielding calls from the



Lillian Carter  
Acting Deputy Chief

shooting of former President Ronald Reagan in 1981 and the crash of Air Florida jet into the 14th Street bridge in 1982.



Bea Rudder  
Deputy Fire Chief

Proudest Moment in the Department: "When I finished my first Emergency Medical Dispatch Course at George Washington University. We had a graduation ceremony and it was the first time I experienced the feeling of being recognized as a valued part of the team."

Emergency Medical Services Division

**A/Deputy Chief Lillian Carter**  
Director of the Office of Customer Service

Year Started: March 1977

Career Highlights: First African American woman in the department to

continued on page 2



# D.C. Fire/EMS Recognized for Pentagon Efforts

By Jonathan Yoder

In the aftermath of the events of September 11 the members of the D.C. Fire/EMS Department received recognition from the Army and the Navy for their efforts at the Pentagon.

Chief Few accepted a commendation from Brigadier General Collis N. Phillips on behalf of the Department of the Army. The commendation

reads in part “quickly responding during a time of great need, the District of Columbia Fire Department’s actions were invaluable in limiting the loss of life and property. You risked your lives and personal safety to assist others, and your example of professionalism is an inspiration to us all.” The commendation is signed by the Secretary of the Army, Thomas E. White, and by the Army Chief of Staff, Eric R. Shinseki.

In another ceremony, Rear Admiral Thomas Wilson, Deputy Director, Surface Warfare Division, Naval Operations, presented Chief Few and the Department with a letter from Navy Secretary Gordon England and an award for “extraordinary courageous and untiring service” that the D.C. Fire/EMS Department provided in the wake of the terrorist attack on the Pentagon.

## Fire/EMS Chief Partners With Law Firm To Fund Canteen Unit

By Denise L. Reed

The DC law firm of Spriggs & Hollingsworth presented a check February 12 to the Friendship Firefighters Association to fund the operation of the DC Fire/EMS Canteen Unit for the year 2002. The Canteen Unit, operated by FFA on a volunteer basis, provides food and drinks to DC firefighters and EMS workers on the scene of major incidents.



Spriggs and Hollingsworth partner Joe G. Hollingsworth, DC Fire/EMS Chief Ronnie Few, FFA President Walter Gold, and Spriggs and Hollingsworth partner William J. Spriggs.

“What a great way for the Fire/EMS Department to connect to our community,” said Chief Few. “It gives business owners here a sense of ownership in our service and our city.”

## Partnership With DC Public Schools

By Aleazor Taylor

The DC Fire and EMS Department has begun a partnership with the District of Columbia Public Schools. The goal of this partnership is to have the Fire Prevention Division and the Department as a whole, become more visible in elementary schools throughout the city. As of October 2001, the Fire Prevention Division worked in conjunction with students to create an evacuation video to explain to children and adults why evacuations drills are important.

On February 22, 2002, seventeen members of the Fire Prevention Division, along with Engine 33 and Truck 8 participated in the AReading Is Fundamental® program at Patricia E. Harris Educational Center. Fire Marshal Bruce Cowan, spoke to the students on the importance of having good reading skills, the joy of reading and the importance of having library cards. He also challenged students to read several books during their summer vacation. Following the assembly, Inspectors and other members of the

Fire Prevention Division visited students in their classrooms and read to them.

During the 2002-2003 school year, our department will teach fire safety to all 4th graders in each elementary school throughout the city. Also, during the 2002-2003 school year, there will be 20 schools in the Adopt-A-School program. The goal of this program is to have a neighboring fire house to become visible in the school they have adopted.

continued from page 1

receive National Registry Emergency Medical Technician /Paramedic Certification and provide emergency advance life support services in the District of Columbia. Progressed through the ranks to become EMS Training Director, from 1988 to 1991; Assistant Director of Emergency Medical Services with the responsibility of managing 36 EMS units, from 1991 to 2000. Graduate of The George Washington University School of Business and Public Management, Center for Excellence in Municipal Management as a Certified Public Manager in January 1999. Project for certification was Customer Service Improvement Management. Detailed August 2000, as Director of the newly established Office of Customer Service and Community Outreach. Provided customer service and injury/illness prevention training for over 2500 internal and external customers. Currently serves as a Customer Service Business Partner in the Mayor’s Office of Customer Service.

Proudest Moment in the Department:

“While serving in the capacity of an Emergency Medical Services Field Provider, there were always proud moments after each successful resuscitation. As a manager, my proudest moment came on November 2, 2000, with the implementation of the Customer Service program.”

Firefighting Division  
**Deputy Fire Chief Beatrice M. Rudder**  
Director of the Professional Standards Office

Year Started: January 15, 1978

Career Highlights: First woman to complete firefighter training, became the first woman DFC’s aide, and the first woman to attain rank: Sergeant, lieutenant, captain, battalion fire chief, deputy fire chief, and Training Director. Was in the first group to receive a MPA from the Department’s

sponsored Master’s program provided by the University of the District of Columbia. As a firefighter on Rescue Squad-1, rescued a suicide victim in the McMillan Reservoir. Later, as a DFC’s aide, received the Bronze Medal for Valor as a participant in a hostage incident. Authored various training manuals. Contributed to the Fire Training Academy course accreditation process.

Proudest Moment in the Department: “During firefighter training, recruits were ordered to complete a timed exercise; scaling the outside of the fire training tower using a pompier ladder. Failure to complete the exercise would warrant termination. Upon reaching the roof within the time limit, I knew that all was well, self-doubt was vanquished and my confidence soared. My outlook remains pointedly focused on clearing all obstacles to conquer any challenge.”

## Mayor’s Meritorious Service Awards Luncheon



Chief Ronnie Few, along with Charlene Drew Jarvis, Chair, DC Chamber of Commerce and Barbara Harrison, NBC 4 Anchor congratulate gold and silver medal recipients.

The Mayor’s Select Committee chose 14 members from the Fire and EMS Department, and the Metropolitan Police Department to receive Gold or Silver Medals at its annual luncheon. The Meritorious Service Awards Luncheon, sponsored by the District of Columbia Chamber of Commerce (DCCC), was held on Thursday, March 14, 2002, at the Capital Hilton, Presidential Ballroom, 16th & K Streets, N.W.

Members from the Fire and EMS Department chosen to receive honors are:

Firefighter **Collin W. Montgomery**  
E-23-2 Gold

Lieutenant **Craig W. Duck**  
T-4-3 Silver

Firefighter **William D. Caudle**  
RS-1-3 Silver

Firefighter **James E. Gordan**  
RS-1-3 Silver

Firefighter **Eric L. Karlson**  
T-6-2 Silver

Firefighter **Thomas T. Keelan**  
E-16-3 Silver

Firefighter **David Keefe**  
T-3-3 Silver

Firefighter **Michael D. LaCore**  
T-4-3 Silver

Firefighter **Jason R. Moore**  
T-4-3 Silver

Firefighter **Brian D. Phillips**  
T-4-3 Silver

Firefighter **Kevin M. Rimm**  
T-4-3 Silver

Firefighter **Jan C. Sipes**  
T-11-1 Silver

Firefighter **Harry H. Wessolleck**  
T-4-3 Silver

Paramedic **John H. Farr**  
E-16-3 Silver



## DC FEMS Shines

By Alan Etter

Several recent incidents have served to showcase the abilities of the dedicated members of the D.C. Fire/EMS Department. Firefighting Division has achieved outstanding results at a number of recent fires beginning with a house fire at 28 Q Street, N.E. December 26th, where they rescued a 74-year-old woman. The fire started about 6:15 p.m. Units from the 1st Battalion responded and suppressed the fire within several minutes.

Firefighters entered the burning two-story townhouse and climbed stairs to the second floor where they found and rescued the woman from the building. She had suffered first degree burns and smoke inhalation. She was transported to Washington Hospital Center's Medstar unit in serious condition.

Participating in the rescue were Lieutenants John Turnell and Kyle Boone.

Firefighting Division went into action again when DC Firefighters rescued two young women from a burning apartment on F St., NW on January 15th.

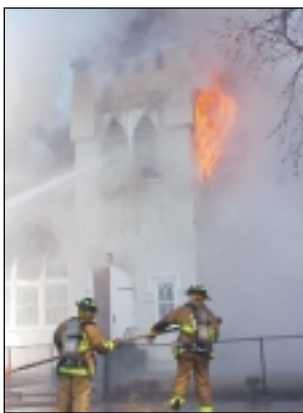
Firefighters responded initially just before 5:00 a.m. for an automatic fire alarm sounding on the fifth floor of the Statesman Apartments, 2020 F St., NW. Lt. Kevin Stuart called communications to fill the box alarm when he observed smoke coming from the apartment. Lt. Stuart and his crew from Engine-23

forced entry and encountered a fire in the living room. Truck-2, led by Lt. Bob Purdy, arrived to find Engine-23's crew fighting the flames amid heavy smoke conditions.

Firefighters on the ground observed two women at the bedroom window, and firefighters in the apartment heard the women's screams for help.

Firefighters pushed through the smoke in the living room to locate the women who were literally hanging out the bedroom window to avoid the heavy smoke. Firefighters physically removed the women, ages 20 and 21, to the hallway where it was determined the women were suffering from minor smoke inhalation.

Another potential tragedy was averted when more than two dozen people, including several children and handicapped residents of a high-rise apartment building in Southeast were pulled from a smoky fire January 16th. Eleven residents were taken to local hospitals for minor smoke inhalation and other injuries.



Firefighters battle blaze at Northeast Church in February.



Fire Investigator Ruth Cade was lauded by the U.S. Attorney's Office for her work which contributed to the conviction of an arsonist.

Just before 10:00 p.m., firefighters were dispatched to the report of an apartment on fire at 2300 Good Hope Rd., S.E., the Marbury Plaza Apartments complex. First arriving units encountered smoke and fire showing from a third floor apartment. Residents were spilling into the courtyard, and several people were trapped on their balconies.

The crews from Trucks 16 and 13 quickly worked to rescue the trapped, while the crews from Engines 15 and 19 attacked the fire. The fire was contained to the original apartment with limited extension to the hallway and another room. There was extensive smoke damage to at least three other apartments.

DC Fire Investigators have ruled the fire accidental. It started when a 19-year-old woman, using a cigarette lighter, began looking for something under her bed. Blankets were ignited, which in turn

ignited the box spring, and the fire spread through the room.

On February 5th an early morning rowhouse fire in Northeast destroyed several homes on Montello Ave., NE and left an elderly woman critically injured.

Fire/EMS units responded to the 1200 block of Montello Ave. shortly after 4 am and encountered heavy fire and smoke conditions in a vacant end unit rowhouse. A search of the adjacent structures found an 88-year-old woman suffering from smoke inhalation. She was rescued from the rowhouse, treated by EMS professionals, and transported to the George Washington University Hospital, where she was treated.

Members of Communications and EMS Division coordinated to achieve a tremendous patient outcome on Jan. 2nd. Lt. LaWanda Calloway is credited with helping save the life of a baby girl by detailing rescue breathing over the phone to a frantic father. The man called 9-1-1 on to say he'd been giving his 1-year-old daughter a bath and turned away briefly. He returned to find her underwater and not breathing. Lt. Calloway calmly took the man through rescue breathing techniques. Paramedic Jonathan Streat, Paramedic Engine 22, arrived to take over, and the girl started breathing on her own by the time she reached Children's Hospital. Great job to all involved in the call!

## Wheelchair-bound British Firefighter Gets Warm Welcome

By Lisa Bass

Swasie Turner, a former British police officer and firefighter, received the red carpet treatment from Chief Few and members of Engine Co. 2 in late February. Turner and his entourage of seven British police and firefighters visited the District, meeting with the Chief and his staff at headquar-

ters and eating breakfast with Rescue Squad 1 and Engine 2. The visits led up to Turner's wheelchair push-off from



Swasie Turner, who embarked on a wheelchair trek to New York's Ground Zero, shares a laugh with Chief Few after a visit to his office prior to the push-off. Turner presented a plaque to Chief Few.

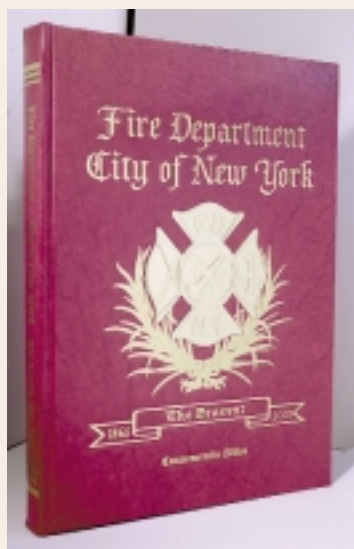
the White House on Saturday, February 23 en route to Ground Zero, site of the World Trade Center terrorist attack. Turner's mission was to raise money for and show solidarity with first responders in the United States in recognition of their efforts on September 11.

## D.C. Fire/EMS Yearbook Deadline Extended

By Gwen Smith

The deadline for submissions to the D.C. Fire/EMS Yearbook has been extended. Submissions will now be accepted until June 14, 2002. Members are encouraged to submit photographs, patches, maps, and similar information you feel should be included. A schedule of formal photographs to be taken by the Yearbook company, Turner Publishing, will be announced in the monthly newsletter, Beacon.

Photocopies of pictures cannot be reproduced. When submitting photographs write a caption explaining who and what is depicted in the photo. In order to ensure that your photo is returned after publication please include your name, station, and phone number on the back of each piece that is submitted.



For more information about any aspect of the Yearbook or to obtain an order form contact Gwen Smith in the Public Information Office at 202-673-3331.

## OFFICE OF INFORMATION AND PRIVACY TACKLES FOIA REQUESTS

By Tisa B. Smith

### Need Information

For Fire Reports, Patient Care Reports, CAD & 911 Call Tapes?

Call FOIA Hotline 202-671-2592

The Office of Information and Privacy (OIP) coordinates the agency's release of documents requested under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). It applies a thorough understanding of the significance of agency information and files, a detailed knowledge and understanding of FOIA and privacy laws, and their application to agency records. OIP analyzes and evaluates material within the scope of requests to determine which documents should or should not be released to the public or media.

For calendar year 2001 OIP received a total of 1,772 requests.



## BFC Reid Receives National Recognition



*BFC Stephen Reid recently received recognition from his peers in the form of several professional honors.*

Battalion Fire Chief Stephen M. Reid, Ph.D., MIFireE, was recently elected into the prestigious Institution of Fire Engineers.

With this designation, Reid becomes the only chief officer in the District to receive this honor and one of only 58 in the nation.

Chief Reid has been recognized as a Certified Safety Specialist from the World Safety Organization and he was recently listed in the International Who's Who in Public Safety. Reid joined D.C. Fire/EMS in Oct. '77 and has more than 34 years experience in fire operations.

## Lt. Rabbit in the Spotlight

Lt. Brenda Rabbit, assigned to Truck 12-2, was in demand as a speaker during March to commemorate



Women's History Month. Lt. Rabbit, a 22-year veteran of the Department, spoke to the 8th Annual Women Mean Business Awards Gala and participated in a panel discussion at the National Institutes of Health the theme was "The World of Women – Post 9-11."

Lt. Rabbit's participation was requested because of her involvement in the response to the Pentagon on September 11. Lt. Rabbit attempted to return to her station as part of the Department's call back, but hopelessly snarled traffic forced her to divert to the Pentagon itself. Lt. Rabbit reported to the command post and was assigned to assist with the deployment of responding personnel into sectors.

Lt. Rabbit joined the Department in 1979. Three years later, she earned a promotion to technician and assigned to tiller a ladder truck. In 1990, she was promoted to Sergeant and in 1991, she was promoted again, to Lieutenant. After an assignment to a company in the Capitol Hill area, Lt. Rabbit spent about two years assigned as an instructor at the Training Academy.

Lt. Rabbit returned to field operations for several years before moving to the Special Operations Division where she was responsible for compiling information and writing standards used in the Department's accreditation process. After completing her assignment in Special Operations, Lt. Rabbit returned to the Firefighting Division and her current assignment at Truck 12.

## STATE-OF-THE-ART TECHNOLOGY FOR FIRE/EMS NEARS COMPLETION

*By Erik Johnson and Chris Zervis*

For the last nine months, the Department's Office of Program Evaluation (OPE), along with the District's Office of the Chief Technology Officer (OCTO), spearheaded the pilot testing of some software and hardware that will soon bring EMS data collection into the 21st Century. Our current data collection instrument has been the time-honored, much maligned 151 runsheet which serves as our primary medical-legal document, captures our EMS providers' clinical findings and treatments, provides the means of evaluating the EMS organization's performance by making a "snapshot" of its most important operational functioning, allows for research and the testing of the effect of different field procedures/medications, and furnishes the basic data needed for billing/reimbursement for our EMS operation.

The Mobile Data Terminal (MDT), installed on every EMS vehicle, will accomplish all these same functions electronically in a comprehensive, legible document that is easily retrievable. The MDT is a portable, wireless computer that may have an attached keyboard, similar to that of a laptop computer. Each vehicle will have docking stations, modem (for



*Mobile data terminals [MDTs] have been installed in several ambulances to test the hardware.*

uploading data), and a printer. The MDTs are military specification compliant and "ruggedized" or "super ruggedized" to meet the demands of on-street usage. Because they are wireless, the data uploaded by field providers can be accessed almost in to real time. The terminals include GPS technology which will better assist field crews reach their intended destinations and help dispatchers assign the closest appropriate unit to each call. Once the MDTs are integrated with the Department's computer-aided dispatch (CAD) system, crews will be able to receive their dispatch information (incident location and number, times, etc.) directly, without need of radio transmis-

sions. The MDTs can also alert crews to hospitals' capacities for receiving additional patients, and crews will be able to instantaneously access medical protocols appropriate to any given call.

The plan is to pilot test three hardware and three software vendors' products. The three types of hardware and two software programs so far tested have ranged in sophistication from basic to moderately sophisticated. OPE wishes to thank all members of the project team and the crews of Medic 8, Medic 19 and Ambulance 24 for their extra effort and continuing support. The reception by pilot participants has been mixed but largely positive overall. One participant said he was "happy to see the Department enter the 21st Century." Others thought the equipment was "fun" and "not as scary as I thought it would be." As the testing phase ends and the procurement process begins, Chief Few believes the Department can begin installing the MDTs by year's end, which will put the District of Columbia in the ranks of very few major cities that have embraced this kind of technology.

## Off-Duty Firefighter Saves Three

*By Alan Etter*

When Michael Poles became a DC Firefighter six years ago, he never knew that sometimes the real action begins at quitting time.

Driving home to his apartment in Northwest after completing his shift on Truck-3, Poles noticed several people standing around outside an apartment building at 3501 13th St., NW. He looked up and saw smoke billowing from a fifth floor apartment.

Poles ran into the building, amid heavy smoke, and began knocking on doors to find people still in the building. He encountered a young mother and her two daughters. They were afraid to leave their apartment. Poles convinced the woman and girls to hold onto him as he led them through the smoke to the safety of the stairwell, where they then climbed down to the street.

"Michael deserves a lot of credit," said DC Fire/EMS Chief Ronnie Few. "It really demonstrates the level of dedication

and sense of duty of all of our people."



*FF Michael Poles led three civilians to safety from a fire he spotted as he returned home from a shift on Truck 3.*

## Blast From the Past: A look at DCFD's 130-year history

*By Walter Gold, President, Friendship Fire Association (FFA)*



It was in 1789, just a few years after our Declaration of Independence from England, that fire protection became important to the 1,500 or so inhabitants who lived in one of America's original settlements, Georgetown. All males old enough to vote were made members of the city's new fire department. All homes were required to have leather water buckets for the firemen to use in case of a fire. Four men from each of Georgetown's election wards were appointed to preserve order at the fire grounds. That job, at times, included quelling bravado fights between rival fire companies.

In September 1871, the official start of the DCFD, the Georgetown Fire Department merged with the Washington Fire Department, and the Georgetown department became what we currently know as Engine Co. 5. By then, other independent fire companies had either disbanded or became a part of the new Washington Fire Department. Those units included the Union Fire Company, which covered the town between 16th Street and Georgetown; the

Anacostia Fire company in Southeast; the Northern Liberty Fire Company, responsible for the current Mount Vernon Square area; and the Columbia Fire Company, (Engine Co. 3), the longest continuous serving fire company in the city's history, located then, and now, near the U.S. Capitol. The FFA currently is building the D.C. Fire & EMS Museum on the top floor of Engine Co. 3, where the history of the department will be more adequately preserved.

Later this year, it will be possible for every current member of the department, including every new recruit, to personally inspect and learn about the tradition and growth of our department during a visit to the FFA museum at Engine Co. 3. For further information, contact Lt. Mark Tennyson, the museum curator, at home, 703-329-0902.

(Editor's note: Walter Gold was police/fire reporter for the old Washington Evening Star. He currently is president of the Washington News Network and vice-president of the D.C. Radio & TV News Directors Association.)